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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EAP, EAP/MLS, DRL, INR

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SUBJECT: SOUTHERN VIOLENCE: THE SLOW PROGRESS OF THE NRC

REF: A. BANGKOK 4108

[B. BANGKOK](#) 6595

Classified By: Political Counselor Susan M. Sutton. Reason. 1.4 (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: The RTG has moved slowly to implement fourteen interim recommendations, issued by the National Reconciliation Commission (NRC), to address violence in the South. While some of the interim recommendations may be of limited utility or impact, the thrust of the report is helpful, underscoring the need for community involvement, improved security for every one, and respect for civil rights. Separately, on October 25, an NRC member leaked an unofficial draft of the NRC's final report. The report will go through several months of revision before its final release in March, 2006. Prime Minister Thaksin ignored calls from some southern Buddhists and northern Senators for the dissolution of the NRC for failing to protect Buddhists in the South. We will continue to encourage the government to work with the NRC to improve government policies in the South. END SUMMARY.

LIMITED PROGRESS ON NRC'S INTERIM RECOMMENDATIONS

¶2. (C) The NRC issued fourteen interim recommendations on July 26 as a first effort to address the ongoing violence affecting Southern Thailand. Most local observers agree that the RTG has made a limited attempt to implement some of the proposals, however there is some confusion over which recommendations the government has been working on. Two NRC members -- Dr. Worawit Baru from Prince of Songkhla University in Pattani, and Buddhist civil activist Phiphop Thongchai -- told emboffs that most Commission members agree that three of the fourteen recommendations have been "implemented." (NOTE: Numbers 2, 4, 7. The complete list of interim recommendations is copied below. END NOTE) However, they had differing opinions on which other recommendation the government had realized. Baru and Phiphop agree that the government is working on the proposals, but suggested policy-level officials were dragging their feet on implementation. They noted that some of the proposals would require amendments to existing laws -- work that has yet to be done by the government.

EARLY DRAFT OF NRC'S FINAL REPORT LEAKED

¶3. (C) Separately, on October 25 an anonymous NRC member leaked to the media a draft copy of the NRC's final report. The 77-page paper compiles the work of the NRC's five separate subcommittees. The full NRC is scheduled to meet in Pattani from November 11-13 to begin the process -- which will continue over the next several months -- of completing the final report; scheduled to be presented to the cabinet in March, 2006. NRC member Mark Tamthai cautioned emboffs that the leaked draft report does not represent the consensus views of the NRC. Tamthai complained that NRC member Chaiwat Satha-Anand had personally compiled and leaked the draft report to the media without consulting other NRC members. We will provide further analysis on the leaked document after further discussions with the NRC and other interested parties.

BUDDHIST BACKLASH TO NRC'S WORK

¶4. (SBU) Meanwhile, Prime Minister Thaksin has brushed aside recent calls from some Buddhist groups and northern politicians to dissolve the NRC. On October 24, the Pattani Sangha Council -- which oversees provincial Buddhist affairs -- issued a 15-point statement calling for, among other things, the dissolution of the NRC. This statement follows the murders of a monk and two novices at a Pattani Buddhist temple on October 16. On October 25 Several Senators from north-eastern Thailand also called for the dissolution of the Commission, blaming the NRC for being "prejudiced" against Buddhists. A Pattani based journalist, Paret Lohansen, told emboffs that the Sangha's statement reflects growing local Buddhist resentment against the NRC. Paret said that many southern Buddhists feel that Muslim NRC members are sympathetic to the separatists and are

accommodating the demands of local Muslims, while ignoring the security concerns of Buddhists.

PROPOSALS USEFUL -- ON BALANCE

15. (C) COMMENT: The NRC interim recommendations below are a mixed bag, including sensible, concrete proposals (permitting defendants timely access to their lawyers), and more philosophical ones (following King Rama VI's policy on tolerance). Several of the recommendations are rather ambiguous and some are, frankly, of debatable utility or impact. (For example, any move by the authorities to confiscate all the privately-owned guns in the area would probably result in havoc.) The general thrust of the recommendations, however, are helpful, underscoring the need for community involvement, improved security for every one, and respect for civil rights. The NRC is the single most respected voice in Thailand calling for long-term solutions to the problems in Thailand's troubled far South. We will continue to encourage the government to work with the NRC sincerely to consider its recommendations and cooperate with it on practical steps to lower tensions and rebuild trust. We expect that the final report will attract much greater attention than the interim recommendations, and there will be much greater pressure on the government to take action on NRC final proposals once they are released. END COMMENT

NRC INTERIM PROPOSALS

16. (NOTE: The NRC members we spoke with consider proposals 2,4, and 7 to have been implemented by the government. There is some disagreement over whether proposals 1 and 9 have been implemented. The proposals were presented on July 26, 2005. END NOTE)

BEGIN EMBASSY TRANSLATION OF NRC'S INTERIM PROPOSALS:

11. The Government should follow King Rama the VI's policy for the South (dated July 6, 1923), which emphasizes a tolerant government policy towards the South.

12. The government should set up a national judicial committee in order to monitor legal actions in the three southern border provinces. (NOTE: Minister of Education Chaturon has established this committee. The committee's responsibilities have not been clearly defined. END NOTE)

13. Persons arrested or detained under Section 11 (1) of the Emergency Decree should be allowed to meet their lawyers and obtain lawyer's assistance within 48 hours.

14. The governments should make better use of forensic science to investigate attacks in the South. (NOTE: The Department of Justice's Central Forensic Institute, under the guidance of the famous Dr. Pornthip Rojanasunant, has begun work assisting in forensic cases in the South. END NOTE)

15. Local leaders and from both the Islamic and Buddhist communities should be allowed to work with local authorities to formulate local policies and represent the views of the local populace.

16. All guns are regarded as illegal in the 3 southern borders provinces, except those possessed by soldiers and police and those who have duty to maintain public safety under the law.

17. The government should install the CCTV in public places in the three southern border provinces. (NOTE: The government has reportedly focused on setting the cameras up in Yala City and is working on other urban areas in the South. END NOTE)

18. Stricter zoning should be enforced. Entertainment venues should be moved away from community areas, religious institution, educational institutions, and youth recreation centers.

19. The government should hold community meetings in villages following an attack in order to clarify facts and dispel rumors. (NOTE: This may be happening at in some local areas but does not appear widespread. END NOTE)

110. Village defense volunteer units, consisting of Ministry of Interior officials, soldiers, police, and the territory defense volunteers should be established.

111. Local communities should set up community peace committees, consisting community leaders, local religious leaders, teachers, local administrators, as well as soldiers and police.

112. Students should be allowed to peacefully express their

views. Authorities should avoid investigating and arresting students in their education institutions without the presence of their teachers.

¶13. All schools, both religious school and public school, should have an alarm system, and modern communication equipment, which is able to communicate directly with security forces.

¶14. The decision to open or close a school or remove the students must be made in consultation with security officials, Ministry of Interior officials, and the school administrators. Authorities should consult teachers on establishing safety standards for schools.

END EMBASSY TRANSLATION OF NRC'S INTERIM PROPOSALS
BOYCE